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ABSTRACT

The two areas of expertise involved in career education--education and work--make it obvious that career education cannot be effective if only educators are involved. That is why, from the beginning, career education has been pictured as a collaborative effort involving educators, the business-labor-industry community, and the home and family structure. Career education is needed for two basic reasons: (1) The world of schooling and the world of paid employment are out of kilter in the United States, and (2) the increasingly technological nature of society and rapid rate of change make it necessary that persons seeking to work be equipped with a combination of adaptability skills that will help them with change, and a set of job-specific skills that will enable them to enter the labor market. In its simplest form, career education is an attempt to help all individuals want to work, acquire the skills necessary to work in these times, and engage in work that is satisfying to the individual and beneficial to society. If the business-labor-industry community will join actively in this effort, it can become a reality. (TA)

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CAREER EDUCATION AND THE BUSINESS-LABOR-INDUSTRY COMMUNITY

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Introduction

The basic theme of these remarks centers around an assertion that the career education concept and the business-labor-industry community in the United States need each other. Both have much to gain, and nothing to lose, by entering into an active, collaborative relationship. My purpose here is to explain and attempt to defend this position.

To do so demands that two topics be briefly discussed. First, it will be necessary to outline the basic nature, goals, and methodology of career education. Second, I would like to outline the role I hope the business-labor-industry community will play in career education.

Career Education: Goals and Needs

Career education is a movement that has committed itself to helping all individuals understand and capitalize on the increasingly close relationships that exist today and that are coming to American society. The two areas of expertise involved - i.e., education and work - make it obvious that career education cannot be effective if only educators are involved. That is why, from the beginning, career education has been pictured as a collaborative effort involving educators, the business-labor-industry community, and the home and family structure.

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Career education is needed for two basic reasons. First, the "world of schooling" and the "world of paid employment" are out of kilter in the United States. Too many people see themselves as going to school primarily so they can go on to still further schooling. Some keep going and some quit. As a result, we have, in terms of job requirements, both "over-educated" and "under-educated" workers in the work force. Both the boredom of the "over-educated" worker and the frustration of the "under-educated" worker contribute to worker alienation - and thus to lower levels of productivity. The results are good neither for society nor for the individual worker.

Second, when the increasingly technological nature of our society is considered simultaneously with its increasingly rapid rate of change, it is clear that persons seeking to work must be equipped with a combination of adaptability skills (that will help them change with change) and a set of job-specific skills that will enable them to enter the labor market. It is equally clear that our current system of formal education - from the elementary school through the college levels - has not changed in ways that will effectively equip students with both kinds of skills.

Equipping Students with Adaptability Skills

There are six kinds of adaptability skills emphasized by career education. Only a thumbnail outline of the ways we hope to provide students with such skills can be presented here:

1. Basic academic skills. We see "reading, writing, and arithmetic" as the most important adaptability skills needed by today's youth. Clear evidence exists that thousands of youth leave school unequipped with such skills. It is basically a matter of educational productivity. We seek

to increase educational productivity through reducing worker alienation among both students and teachers. Our methods are essentially the same as those used in reducing worker alienation in business and industrial settings.

2. Basic work habits. Good work habits are essential to productivity in any field and so certainly qualify as adaptability skills. Like most other positive social habits, they are practiced best by adults if learned as children. Schools have slackened their emphasis on teaching work habits in the last 30 years. Career education seeks to turn this around through having such habits taught consciously, conscientiously, and proudly by all teachers beginning in the early elementary school years.

3. Work values. Societal changes have produced changes in the variety of ways persons answer the question "Why should I choose to work?" Our youth need to understand the differing kinds of work values that exist in today's society and to choose some set of work values that will be personally meaningful to them. Career education seeks to help students learn and appreciate this variety. Exactly what work values a particular individual chooses is not nearly so important as that he or she chooses some such set of values. Make no mistake. We do want students to want to work. Career education is not ashamed to admit this.

4. Knowledge of Work, Work Environments, and Occupations. Many youth today haven't rejected work. Rather, they have had no first-hand experiencing of work. There is only so much one can learn about work out of a book. Career education seeks to help all students both observe and experience work. In addition, career education seeks to help all students know and understand basic elements of economic awareness, the free

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enterprise system, the organized labor movement, and consumer education. Such knowledge is vital to adaptability and to career choice-making.

5. Career Decision-Making Skills. Career decision making, like decision making in general, represents a set of skills that can be learned by almost all persons. Such skills are vital to both initial career choices and to adult adaptability needs. Career education seeks to equip youth with such skills through the joint efforts of counselors, teachers, parents, and members of the business-labor-industry community.

6. Job Seeking, Job Getting, and Job Holding Skills. Again, we see a set of important, yet basically simple, skills that are essential to career adaptability. Career education seeks to equip all students - those going to college as well as those who do not - with such skills and to give students opportunities to practice such skills in real and/or simulated situations.

It is career education's conscious and purposeful emphasis on these six adaptability skills which, when given high educational priority, most clearly make career education something "new and different."

Equipping Students with Job-Specific Skills

In the past, only students in vocational or technical education were viewed as needing job-specific skills by formal education. Career education seeks to correct this situation in three basic ways.

First, career education aims to make education, as preparation for work, a prominent and permanent goal of all who teach and of all who learn. Career education seeks to have all students, by the time they leave the educational system (Note: for some, this will mean high school but for others it will mean a college or university) be equipped with a set of

vocational skills that can be used to enter the labor market. To fulfill this aim, career education encourages increases in vocational and technical education at secondary and postsecondary education levels. In addition, career education encourages colleges and universities to offer some vocational skill training to supplement their liberal arts emphasis.

Second, career education seeks to call national attention to disparities between availability of kinds of vocational skill training available to youth and entry occupations available in the world of paid employment. Hopefully, this may encourage the general public to support a wide variety of educational institutions whose mix is more in line with reality.

Third, career education, in emphasizing entry job skills for school leavers, tries to bring equal emphasis to vocational training opportunities existing outside of formal education - including both OJT and formal apprenticeship programs. Differences between acquiring initial entry level skills and acquiring the skills of a competent worker - be it a craftsman or a lawyer - are great and becoming greater. It is an element of reality that all youth today need to understand.

Note that the career education concept calls for identification of need and provisions for more appropriate vocational skill training at all levels of education. Such training is actually provided by vocational educators, by college professors, by members of the business-labor-industry community, and by employed professional persons. In this sense, career education can be thought of as a catalyst for providing such training. Such a catalyst has been needed, we think, for years.

Career Education and the Business-Labor-Industry Community

From the beginning, those of us in career education have emphasized that career education is not something educators can do by themselves. Without the active involvement of both the business-labor-industry community and the home and family structure, career education cannot succeed. Here, time does not permit me to talk about the home and family structure's role in career education. I can only provide a brief listing of the basic ways in which we seek the collaborative efforts of the business-labor-industry community. These include:

1. Serving as resource persons in classrooms at all levels of education to help both students know and appreciate relationships between education and particular kinds of work.

2. Providing observational work experience, and work-study to students and to those who educate students - to teachers, counselors, college professors, and administrators.

3. Providing expert knowledge and consultation to educators concerning the nature of work, the changing nature of occupations, learning opportunities in the business-labor-industry community, and basic principles of the free enterprise system and the organized labor movement.

4. Providing collaborative assistance to education personnel in attempts to help school leavers, at any level of education, make a successful transition from school to work.

5. Providing effective ways of humanizing the work environment so that work, in the world of paid employment, can become more meaningful and more satisfying to individual workers.

6. Encouraging educators and educational systems to change in ways consistent with the career education concept.

7. Working with educators who, with both youth and adult students, are trying to provide skills that will help persons make more productive use of leisure time.

In all of these ways, educators must have the collaborative assistance of the business-labor-industry community if career education is to succeed. The expertise in that community must be combined with the expertise of professional educators if the challenges facing youth in these times are to be met.

Concluding Remarks

I hope these remarks, by trying to convey what career education is, have convinced you that career education is not:

1. A new name for "vocational education"
2. An attempt to discourage youth from attending college
3. An attempt to make education, as preparation for work, the only goal of American education.
4. An attempt to downplay the importance and necessity of both general education and liberal arts education.
5. An attempt to lower educational standards.
6. An attempt to de-humanize American education
7. An attempt to restore the classic work ethic

Career education is none of those things. In its simplest form, career education is an attempt to help all individuals (a) want to work; (b) acquire the skills necessary to work in these times; and (c) engage in work that is satisfying to the individual and beneficial to society. If successful, "work" will once again become an honored expression - not a dirty four-letter word - for all persons. If the business-labor-industry will join actively in this effort, it can become a reality.

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